

# Wagner alumni praise school's new direction



ADVANCE PHOTOS/MIKE FALCO

Norman Smith, center, president of Wagner College, chats with some of the school's alumni during reunion festivities last night. From left are Advance Editor Les Trautmann, Class of 1940; Donald Spiro, Class of 1949; Joseph Watson, Class of 1989; and Barney Jensen, who is retiring as the school's registrar and was a member of the Class of 1950.

By KERRY DIAMOND  
ADVANCE STAFF WRITER

Growth and good friends were the key words last night as Wagner College opened its doors to welcome and honor students, faculty and alumni at the Wagner Alumni Association's annual awards and reunion dinner.

Holding reunions were the Classes of 1939 and 1949, celebrating their 50th and 40th reunions, respectively. They, along with the evening's honorees, began with a cocktail reception during which they reacquainted themselves with people they haven't seen in

years.

"We've seen good times, and we've seen bad times, and now we're back to the good times," exclaimed Wagner College president Norman R. Smith, to the enthusiastic applause of the alumni during his welcoming address.

His speech touched upon Wagner's growth over the past year, but emphasized how much further they have to go to achieve Wagner's deserved prestige.

He also mentioned the financial

support Wagner will be needing in the years ahead. "There has to be someone in Manhattan who has skyscrapers, boats and airplanes that doesn't have a business school named after him," quipped Smith.

The awards presentations were held after Smith's speech and dinner. Alumni who were honored for achievement were Mario Esposito, County Clerk of Richmond County and Helen MacNeal Huber, member of the New Jersey State Board of Accounting.

Those honored for service were:



Michael Nicolais (Class of 1949); Mildred Olsen (Class of 1950 and president of the Wagner Alumni Association); Fred Willecke (Class of 1940 and a retired professor of foreign languages); Edith Gott (Class of 1939); and Mario Esposito (Class of 1950), left to right, get together to look at school yearbooks during last night's annual Wagner College Alumni Association reunion and awards dinner.

Rev. Dr. Harold Haas, interim pastor at Trinity Lutheran Church in Camp Hill, Pa.; Alfred Palladino, vice president-resident manager of Shearson-Lehman Hutton; and Claire Regan, entertainment editor of the Advance; and for merit, Barney Jensen, retiring Wagner registrar; Gela Mikilauskas, assistant athletic director and women's basketball coach; and Otto Raths, a physics professor at Wagner.

Also honored were Carol Falabella, Michilina Martucci, Terry Underwood and Joseph Watson, all members of the Class

of 1989.

Catherine McDermott, Class of 1939, was thrilled about being back at the alma mater. She had no problem recognizing any of her former classmates. "The faces are the same, they're just a little wrinkled," she laughed.

Everyone present had praise for Wagner College, and especially for Smith. As Donald Spiro, Class of 1949, who will be taking over as Chairman of the Board of Trustees, put it, "The attitude and the impression of the people who have returned is amazement at the positive outlook of the school.

Which, of course, is the result of the enthusiastic leadership of Dr. Smith. He's made so many positive changes."

Kevin Sheehy, Class of 1967, who lauded not only Smith, but also Spiro, stated, "The team of Smith and Spiro will lead and expand this college into the 21st Century."

One of the honored alumni, Mario Esposito, reflected on his former classmates. "This is a great school with great people. With the new president at the helm, it is really growing."